

## **Week of September 16, 2002: MDOT Flash Facts**

### **Topic: Autumn Adjustments- Rain, Fog, Sunlight and Leaves**

#### **Monday**

Autumn may seem to be an unlikely time for new driving problems, but drivers do need to make adjustments.

##### **Facts:**

Fall months can be wet. Fog is not uncommon. In the past three years, over 10,000 crashes occurred in rain or fog. They resulted in nearly 60 fatalities and about 4,600 injuries. About one third of the fatalities were due to illegal or unsafe speed.

##### **Tips:**

Rain and fog can affect your ability to see and be seen by others. Here are some tips to keep you safe during these poor weather conditions.

- Reduce speed. (Traction is reduced any time the pavement is wet, and this affects your ability to stop and turn.)
- Roads are particularly slick at the start of a light rain due to oil residue on the pavement.
- Leave an extra cushion of space between you and the car ahead of you. (At least a 4 second following distance is recommended.)
- Drive within the limits of how far you can see (especially at night).
- Anytime your windshield wipers are on, your headlights must be on too (it's the law).
- If fog or heavy rain conditions are so severe that you decide to stop, stop in a parking lot or other safe location away from the roadway. (It is safer to pull off the road than to drive along at 5 or 10 miles per hour.)
- Use low beam headlights in fog.

#### **Wednesday**

##### **Facts:**

During the past three years, over 10,000 crashes occurred in rain or fog. These crashes resulted in nearly 60 fatalities and about 4,600 injuries.

##### **Tips:**

Part of your ability to stay safe on the road depends on the maintenance of your vehicle. Here are some checklist items for safe fall driving.

- Make sure all lights on your vehicle are working (headlights, tail lights, directional signals and side marker lights. Keep them clean - carry a rag for this purpose).
- Periodically change your windshield washer blades to keep them working effectively.
- Make sure your defroster is working
- Keep all glass clean-including the inside of your windshield. (This makes a big difference in adverse conditions-especially sun glare.)
- Make sure your tires have good tread so that you get maximum traction and minimize hydroplaning. (Hydroplaning occurs when the vehicle tires ride up on a film of water and lose contact with the road surface.)
  - Hydroplaning can begin at speeds as low as 30 miles per hour.

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-In heavy rainstorms, or where ponding of water occurs, hydroplaning can cause the loss of the ability to stop or corner.

## **Friday**

This week's Flash Facts have focused on driving adjustments needed in the Fall. Today we will discuss two more items-Leaves and Sunlight.

More and more, leaves will be finding their way onto the roadway. Here are some reminders to keep everyone safe.

-Leaf covered road surfaces reduce traction, especially when wet.

-Slow down, especially in bad weather.

-Curves can be especially dangerous.

-Keep a safe following distance.

-Drive clear of leaf piles. Children may be playing in them.

-The days are getting shorter. The timing and the angle of the sun are changing, so you may experience new sun glare problems.

-Keep both the inside and outside of your windshield clean. (Even a thin dirty film on the glass can significantly cut your visibility in sun glare conditions.)

-Use your visor to block the direct sunlight.

-Do not look directly into the sun, but at the roadway to minimize the glare.

With shorter days but still mild temperatures, joggers, bicyclists and pedestrians may be out in the early morning, twilight or nighttime hours. Keep an eye out for them. (Walkers and joggers should always face traffic unless on a sidewalk, while bicycles should travel with traffic. All pedestrians and bicyclists should wear bright reflective clothing so drivers will see them.)